

The Difference between Soul and Spirit

It is quite clear that the Bible, and in particular the New Testament, declares a difference between the soul and the spirit in human lives and very much in Christians in particular. Tracking down the difference can be quite a challenge as there are no passages which deal with the subject all in one place. Also the use of words for 'flesh' and 'body' and so on has to be understood in the context in which they are written. It is clear that humans are three parts, body, soul and spirit, all interacting with each other as we live, and the spirit is the innermost part of our beings. This teaching will do its best to bring the reader to the truth so that they may understand their own hearts and thinking, and discover what is really of the Spirit of God in their lives and what is just from themselves and comes just from their natural man. Hebrews 4.12 tells us "*For the Word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart*". (American Standard Version (ASV)) So it is 'the word of God' which is able to judge (Interlinear Bible (IB)) and therefore can divide between the soul and spirit, so this is our means of determining the difference. As we will see later on, the difference relates to the source of that which we do rather than what we do. Whereas joints relate to movement, marrow is where the blood is made; life is in the blood, so it is about which life, natural or spiritual, is at the source of what we do. So this comment, which will be made again and again in this teaching, is made at the start to encourage the reader to hear and know the 'word of God', as only by knowing the word can we understand the source of what we do. The 'word of God' is not just the written word, it is much more than that; it is the absolute word of God which will remain for ever. We read, "*For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven*" in psalm 119, and "*The word of God, which lives and abides for ever*" in 1 Peter chapter 2. In addition, only if this teaching is used by the Holy Spirit as the 'Word of God' to minister to the reader will it really accomplish that for which it is written. Please understand however no great pretensions are made for this teaching, simply that if we are to know what is soul and what is spirit we are entirely dependent on the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts. This teaching merely seeks to point the Christian who is seeking truth in the right direction, which is really to the Lord Jesus and the 'word of God'. As we shall see later, John the apostle was on the isle of Patmos for the 'word of God' and the testimony of Jesus Christ. We don't have to be on an island but we do have to be in a place in our lives set apart to hear God's eternal word, as only by that word will we know that which is of soul, and of no value eternally, or that which is of spirit, by the Spirit of God, and will glorify God and bring forth 'fruit which shall remain'. If we are not taught by the Holy Spirit, all that will be achieved is 'head knowledge' which only builds up the 'natural man'; 'knowledge puffs up' and will actually hinder the desire of our Lord Jesus that His people are 'spiritual'. So much of this world, both religious and non-religious, is designed to build up and strengthen the natural man, and as such is a hindrance to the work of the Spirit of God who wants to work out His life in our lives. Knowledge makes us proud, whereas the sacrifices of God are 'a humble spirit and a contrite heart'. What we need is a true knowledge of God which only comes from the Lord Jesus by His Spirit. Proverbs tells us that "*The knowledge of the Almighty is understanding (KJV)*".

A little earlier we quoted from 1 Peter 1.2; the whole verse says, "*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever (KJV)*". We see here how the word of God is involved in regeneration. Peter says we are born again of incorruptible seed, it can't go bad, and

that is by the 'word of God'. Ephesians 5 talks of 'the washing of water by the word', so we can see from the beginning how the word of God by the Spirit is involved in the regeneration of those who become Christians. Here is the start of the separation between the natural and the spiritual man. The 'word' penetrates into our spirits and imparts the life of God so giving us a spirit within which gives life, and it is the continuation of the application of that 'word' which maintains us in knowledge of that which is 'spirit' and that which is merely 'soul'. Jesus was in the beginning as the 'Word' and the 'word' is all about Him and His nature which comes to us when we receive Him and works the work of God in our spirits and causes us to be born again. The very famous passage about all of this is John 3 when Nicodemus comes to visit Jesus and asks, in a roundabout way, the secret of His life. Jesus replies, "You must be born again". "You have to be spiritual. I am born of the Spirit and you must be also, because 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit'". It is all just as simple as that, which is why the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh so that all who truly receive the Lord Jesus can be born of God, born again, born from above, born of the Spirit and be spirit. So that which is born of the flesh is flesh, it is natural and is of soul. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit and spiritual. 1 Corinthians 15.35 helps us enormously to see the difference between the two types of persons brought into being by God. We read, "*The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit*" (ASV). The last Adam is our Lord Jesus Christ; He was a 'quickening' (KJV) or 'life giving' spirit; the spirit in Him gave Him life. That is exactly what Jesus was, a 'life giving spirit', that was His basic nature, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, whereas the first Adam was in basic nature a living soul. There was no spirit in Him to give him life. We are here talking about the life of God, which is everlasting. All who are descended from the first Adam, indeed every human being on the earth, is a living soul. It is their souls that live, they have natural life and as long as the soul remains in the body it will have natural life. When the body dies of course the soul leaves but continues to exist, but souls do not have eternal life until they receive the Lord Jesus. As we have said, there was a spirit in our Lord Jesus which put the life of Almighty God within Him. That was necessary as the first Adam had 'fallen', sin entering into his heart, following Adam's disobeying the commandment of God and eating of the 'forbidden fruit'. God had of course provided the 'tree of life' in the Garden of Eden as well as 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil', with the intention that the 'living soul' which God had created would eat of the tree of life and 'live'. There was the place in Adam, a heart, a spirit, into which the Spirit of God could have come. Instead, when Adam committed sin, death, spiritual death, entered into his heart, spirit, and this spiritual death therefore came upon all human beings. A fresh start was needed by God to restore that which was destroyed by sin, so a new generation of human beings was needed and Jesus became the first of this new generation. He was not conceived by a man but by the Holy Spirit, but had a natural birth through His mother Mary. Jesus had, and was born as a human, with the life of God within Him. Charles Wesley in his famous carol 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing' puts this truth wonderfully.

"Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel"

This life was in Jesus' Spirit and it gave Him life. Jesus therefore was a life giving spirit. It was the life which was available to Adam, from the tree of life, but never received, Adam made the wrong choice. Now since Jesus came and brought salvation, He made new birth possible. We can choose life, and in some ways even once we have received the life we have the choice whether to walk in that life and be 'spiritual' or whether to return to that which is natural, of flesh and of soul. So, to say it again so it is very clear, Jesus was a **life giving spirit**. He had within Himself, in His spirit, that which gave Him life, not natural life, but eternal life, the life of God. In John 5.26 Jesus says, "*For as the Father has life in Himself so had He given the Son to have life in Himself*". In one way our whole subject is really quite simple, it is all about life and what kind of life is manifest in our lives; is it the life of God, does it come from the Spirit of God within us, or is it just from our souls, from the natural man? God wants us to be spiritual, that is His ultimate purpose, but Paul writes to the Corinthian Church, "*You are still carnal; there are divisions among you*". So in spite of them "*Being enriched in all things*", there was in this church a division that was based on 'I am of...' and Paul says that is of the flesh. It is about self and self-interest and opinion and having regard to men and their reputation. So we see the dangers even here; there were other dangers to their spiritual life in that church too, but it all demonstrates that when self-interest is involved it is enough to make us carnal, to keep us as babes in Christ, and that hinders the flow of the Holy Spirit in our lives and prevents us being 'spiritual'.

Paul the apostle prayed for the Colossians, "*That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and **spiritual** understanding*" so here is the true knowledge which will direct our lives into doing the will of God and makes us 'spiritual' men and women, giving us a spiritual understanding. Jesus said "*The words I speak to you are **spirit** and they are life*", so when we have the 'Word of God' it is firstly spiritual and then life bringing. It is not receivable or understandable by the natural man, so we must be born again, with the Spirit of God in our hearts, to apply the word of God and cause us to live. The 'Word of God' brings life, eternal life to us; this was the whole intention of God in His work for us in the Lord Jesus in order that we should have life, and it is, as we have said, the 'Word of God' which brings that life to us, as we saw earlier, "*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever*" (KJV). The life is the life of eternal God who is a **Spiritual** being and therefore such life is spiritual and will only function in God's people by the Holy Spirit. Because of the life, we are alive, our spirits are alive and we can live unto God; we know Him and that is eternal life. Jesus prayer in John 17 helps us. "*This is life eternal that they may know you the only true God and Jesus Christ who you have sent*". So real life, spiritual life, eternal life, comes from God alone, it comes by His word and when we are in that life our whole lives will be taken up with the knowledge of God, we will walk with Him, no longer following our own souls but the **Spirit** of God. That life can then be a life which is filled with the Spirit of God. Thus are Christians enabled to 'walk in the **Spirit** and not in the flesh' and therefore able to live free from 'themselves' and their own motives and no longer fulfil the desires of their own flesh and mind.

It is quite clear that God sees and knows the source of our lives and what sort of works we do, whether 'spiritual' or 'carnal'. A voice from heaven declares "*This is my beloved Son*", and in chapters 2 and 3 of the book of the Revelation we read, "*I know your works*". So God is not taken in by any attempt we may make in this world to cover up the truth. We may try and hide the truth of our motives from human beings and may get away with our deception, but we can never do that with the Lord. "*And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we*

have to do” (ASV). The challenge for us is to be able to recognise where our life and living comes from, whether it is from the flesh, the natural man, and is just natural life, or from the spirit and thereby by the Spirit of God and is the life of God. Those who have the life of God will bring forth fruit unto God, they will bring forth spiritual fruit. Galatians 6 tells us *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that sows unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life (KJV)”*.

We realise, therefore, that *“Those who are in the flesh cannot please God”*. Jesus said too that *“Those who worship God must worship in Spirit and truth”*. God is therefore very strict about what is acceptable to Him as far as that which we offer to Him. He has, nevertheless, made this wonderful provision, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”*. Therefore there is a way to be totally right before God and fulfil all of God’s requirements, not of our own works but by His grace. We must realise that the blessings which bring us to the place before God ‘in love’ are **spiritual** so we need to be ‘in the Spirit’ to live in them and benefit from them. The offerings in the Old Testament had to fulfil very strict criteria and their description helps us to understand that our lives must also follow strict criteria if they are to be living sacrifices to God. In Exodus 29: 38-41 for example, we read that when the lambs were offered morning and evening they had to be offered with flour mixed with oil and wine. The flour is where we get bread from, mixed with oil which symbolises the Spirit of God. The wine represents the blood so here we have in symbolism ‘bread and wine’, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus, and the Spirit of God is in the symbolism too, showing us that every offering has to be made on the basis of Jesus’ death for us and be made by the Spirit of God. 1 Peter 2.5 tells us that we are to *“Offer up spiritual sacrifices to God which are acceptable by Christ Jesus”*. This confirms what we have seen in Exodus, that the offerings are only made acceptable by Jesus Christ and have to be by the Spirit, and therefore ‘spiritual’. So to know whether what we offer is of the spirit or just our souls and of the natural man is vitally important to the Christian, our offering is to God and He sees that which we bring; but we are here to please Him so it is essential that we know the source of that which we offer in order to have confidence before Him. This may help; John writes *“Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.”*²⁴ *And he that keeps his commandments dwells in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us”*. This helps us with our hearts, our consciences before God, and identifies the works which will be expected in our lives when we are ‘spiritual’. So we see that ‘soul’, the flesh, the natural man, as the basic origin for worship appears not, from the Biblical point of view, to meet God’s requirements. The Bible is our absolute source of truth and it is not up to human beings, however famous they are in religious and church circles, to change the declaration of the Bible. Such actions are indeed flesh and soul at its worst and yet so indicative of the arrogance of the human soul as it sets itself against the declared truth of the Bible. How much in modern times have we seen Biblical truth contradicted by ‘church leaders’ who readily are conformed to this world, and a gospel preached which pleases humans but not God?

We **must** be ‘in the spirit’, full of the Holy Ghost and fully submitted to our Lord Jesus. The offerings God looks for are both **sacrificial** and **spiritual**. They must be of His spirit and involve sacrifice; there must be a giving where the pleasure is concentrated, not on us enjoying it all and feeling great, but God being blessed by that which we have given. It must be a sweet smelling sacrifice to Him, a savour of rest

to God's heart. With sacrifice there must be a cost, not financial, but it may involve finance, in that which we give, and it could be said with great certainty that if a life is not a 'spiritual sacrifice', a living sacrifice, from a life fully laid down to the will of our Lord Jesus, then all the singing, liturgy, words and so on will never be a 'spiritual sacrifice' and will never meet God's requirement for worship in Spirit and truth.

The Old Testament is full of God saying 'He was not pleased with their offerings' and in Malachi it says, "*Will a man rob God?*" This is because they did not give Him the best. So it is with us, if we have not given Him everything, and that by His mercies and not through our own arrogance, then any offerings we make, from our singing to flower arrangements, from communion to baptism, from choirs to the gifts of the spirit, from great crusades to hospitality, and so on, are just not pleasing to God, they are of 'soul' and not 'spirit'.

So how do we know what is 'soul' and what is 'spirit'? God's word is the real and only method of helping us out, it produces the separation, or division, of soul from spirit and shows us what are the real thoughts and intentions of our hearts. As we have said the 'word' is more than just the Bible, it is God's absolute word. The word for 'thoughts', in the Greek language, is '**enthumesis**'; which means 'an inward reasoning'. It is usually used more as a device and, interestingly, predominantly of an evil 'reasoning or device' and has anger in the root of the word. So here are the devices of our hearts, the methods employed in the heart, usually for the non-Christian and the carnal Christian, to get their own way, to do their own thing and follow their own way and will. The word for intentions is '**ennoia**' which indicates designs or intentions, perhaps motivations and ambitions, so are the desires within the heart which cause us to employ 'devices'; ways of getting what we want by exercising our own wills. The Anglican Prayer, in the General Confession, talks of "Following too much the devices and desires of our own hearts" and probably is just about right, as it describes the outworking of self and sin in a life. Of course the spiritual man or woman will have "*Put off the old man with his deeds*" (KJV) and no longer be following such a manner of living. Even if in the General Confession the words it uses are right, it sets a pattern for people to follow designed of man and keeps the believer for ever in the impossibility of their souls and fails to move them into the freedom of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

However, probably desires and devices is a better way round, as desires come first and then the method to fulfil them comes second; they work intricately, plotting together, Jeremiah says "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*"

It is therefore essential for us to hear the 'Word of God' by which God Himself shows us what are the real devices and desires of our hearts. It is all very positive, there is no intention to destroy us but it is the goodness of God to bring us to repentance. It is in order that we can change direction and forsake the soul and be taken up by the Spirit of God; we will then not follow the desires and devices of our own hearts but lay them aside to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God, by Christ Jesus.

So we need a means of putting off those things which are of the flesh, so that we are not subject to them and able to live free unto God and 'live'. Romans 8 tells us, "*For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the **Spirit** do **mortify** the deeds of the body, ye shall live*". Here the deeds of the body, the natural man, have to be put to death, to be rendered inactive. This action is done by the Spirit of God and not by natural means. To do so we need to be 'spiritual' and 'in the Spirit', and yet to continue to be 'spiritual' we must put these deeds of the body to death. It is a continual process and as Ephesians 4 tells us, "*That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful*

lusts". Colossians 3 tells us this, "*Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds*". So the Colossians' letter tells us we have put off the old man, the old nature in modern translations, and the Ephesians' letter to continue to put off the old nature; both are true, to be able to continue we must have first 'put off the old man', old nature, and having done so we then have put on the 'new man', the spiritual nature and therefore 'being in the Spirit' we are in the place to obey the Romans 8 command and put to death, through the Spirit, the deeds of our body. The result from Romans 8 is 'that we live'; the life of God, which we have looked at already, is outworked, released, liberated, which ever word we wish to choose, into our beings and we live. Romans 8 also tells us that our 'spirits', our hearts if you like, are 'life' because of the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, so here is our life, our spiritual life, which is released as we live putting to death the deeds of the body. Romans 8 also tells us "*If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken (make alive) your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you*" (KJV). So here we have the means of having the life of God even operating within our bodies once we have received the Holy Spirit. This is some of the outworking of God giving us all spiritual blessings in Christ and providing the means for us to be 'spiritual.' Colossians 3, "***Mortify*** *therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry*". So we have a list of some of the 'members' which are on the earth, and we see some of them relate to sexual and immoral sin and yet others to attitudes of the heart, the lust of the eyes and the 'pride of life'. All these things need to be continually put off if we are to be spiritual and to live in the spirit and therefore not be in the flesh, in the natural man and therefore of soul. Only with the 'word of God' showing us the things which are not right can we put them to death, mortify them. Only with the 'word of God' showing us the real motives in what we do and the devices we use to achieve them can we put them to death and allow them to have nothing in us. None of us knows him or herself well enough to make a judgement as to his or her own spirituality, or not, as the case may be. None of us understands the motives of our hearts until God shines His light and shows us. But God knows and will cause us to know. Hallelujah. "*The entrance of your word brings light*" and "*Let the word of God dwell in you richly with all wisdom*" and "*Your word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you*" are Biblical verses that declare the way the 'word of God' works in us.

The devices and desires will cover all the areas in which the natural man, flesh, can operate. It includes all the deeds of the body that we have mentioned earlier, and these are best summed up as the three 'areas of the world' described in 1 John 2. Firstly there is the 'lust of the flesh', which is often related to physical and sexual desire as well as relating to eating, gluttony and so on. It can also relate to a pre-occupation with our bodies, popular in modern times. Not that Christians should neglect or abuse our bodies as they are the temple of the Holy Spirit, but we should exercise ourselves to godliness which will bring a discipline into the way we use our bodies. The second part of 'the world' is the 'lust of the eyes' which involves covetousness and desiring the things of this world, that which we see with our eyes. It can again involve a pre-occupation with our bodies, developing an image in our minds which we will serve, but also relates to possessions, the gain of material wealth and so on, and of course involves covetousness as wanting that which we do not have. Third in 'the world' is the 'pride of life'. This involves self-promotion, ambition, reputation and so on, and is all about pride, with covetousness as part of its operation in seeking a place with fame and reputation. Those who pursue such things can be totally ruthless in their ambition, and damage and destroy other lives as they strive for that which they desire. With all the three 'aspects of the world' there are devices which humans employ to get that

which we lust after, to achieve the goal which has been set. It is all of the soul of the natural man seeking to promote self and self-will in every part of life. James describes the 'tongue', that which we say or speak, as being full of deadly poison. In many ways that applies to all the works of the flesh; they are lethal. They work death in those who work in them, "*The wages of sin is death*", but also in those who are damaged by the actions of those pursuing the desires of flesh and mind. There is no need to list all the possibilities of the damage to others here but those who read will be aware of the outworkings of sin in their own country and culture and people. It is sadly very often the weakest and most vulnerable who suffer.

In contrast "*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart*", a heart which has heard the 'Word of God' and recognised its wrongdoing in its thoughts and intentions, and been convicted and then broken and been changed. No pride left. Watchman Nee, the famous Chinese pastor who wrote many helpful books, wrote on the 'Release of the spirit' with much of the emphasis on brokenness. It talks of how God brings brokenness into the natural man, into the soul, to allow the spirit to be released. In the Bible we read of the woman with the alabaster jar who broke it so that all the fragrance could be released. It is like that with the Christian, Jesus' strength is made perfect in weakness, and in a world which promotes strength and power, the sacrifices of God are contrition and brokenness. Psalm 51 is King David's confession and repentance following His sin over Bathsheba and plotting the murder of Uriah. There is no time here to look at the devices employed by David to achieve his goal. This was all of David's soul, his flesh, his natural man, and involved the lust of the flesh and eyes and the pride of life. The 'Word of God' came from Nathan to show David the thoughts and intentions of his heart, and Psalm 51 is the result of David's 'godly sorrow' leading to repentance, which brought about the brokenness of heart. David says, "*Take not thy Holy Spirit from me*". Although not born again and filled with the Spirit as is a true Christian, David nevertheless knew the Spirit of God with him following his anointing, to be king, by Samuel. David recognises that which he has done is not of the 'Spirit' and the dangers of losing the direction of the 'Spirit' in his life, and pleads for that not to take place. It should be a warning to even the most spiritual person that sin, the deeds of the body, the works of the flesh, the operation of the soul, puts at risk the whole operation of the Spirit of God within our lives, and "*Let him who thinks he stands take heed unless he falls*".

So we continue in our pursuit of soul and spirit and the difference between them. It is important to recognise the abilities of the human soul and the power within it. The soul has a huge capacity for apparent good as well as for evil and that is the subtlety of it all. God breathed into man to make him a living soul, humans were made in the image of God, and therefore there is an immense capacity in human souls with all the intelligence and strength of human beings. Look at all the inventions in the world and see the capacity and sheer brilliance of the human mind in what it has learned and created. It is nothing compared with God ultimately but still quite amazing, so we need to be very aware of these things and be able to tell that which is just human, natural, and that which really is of the Spirit of God. Also, we need to recognise that human souls can generate a very good substitute for real spiritual life. The devil would very much like to keep it that way, as in doing so it denies God the thing which He most desires, our true love and worship in the Spirit. One way of achieving the denial of God's wishes of course is through the other religions of the world which do not lead to the true and living God. In them we find every conceivable contrivance and method and pattern and belief trying to bring emotional satisfaction for the soul. Much depends on fear, and ranges from the primitive animism of jungle tribes to the complicated religious practices of both the large and small world religions. They

look to bring an element of justification, to bring peace to a heart or at least to placate the God they serve. There are countless methods, from patterns of prayer to sacrifices to the 'gods' and 'spirits', all which bring a person into darkness and make their lives so vulnerable to oppression from the powers of darkness. Much will seem total madness and sometimes we can be amazed by what people actually believe, and will do, as part of their religion, and yet to those with a culture and tradition in the things which they believe, it seems quite normal. There are many dangers in all such practices as they do not lead to eternal life, and all these things involve the soul, the flesh, the natural man, in some way or other. Today much of 'religion' involves spending money; 'shopping' is the thing, with material possessions being the god people serve. There is also secularism, which is the belief that peoples' lives should not be controlled by religion, and yet it is served as a god, an ideal, by many, especially those who believe in evolution and therefore deny the existence of any god, let alone the God of the Bible. We are told in Galatians, "*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*". (ASV) So we can see that even things like sorcery, witchcraft is how the KJV translates the word, can be of the flesh, from the natural man, and therefore of the soul. Of course it can be from unclean or evil spirits within a person, but the wish here is to see what canaries from the soul of a person. There must be an involvement with the devil and his hosts but the 'works', for they we are told are works of the flesh, are generated from the soul. So the soul, as we have said, has great possibilities, and especially when joining with satan in pagan practices, both in other religions but sadly also in a 'false Christianity'. That is a form of 'Christian faith' where to quote Paul the apostle, "*Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away*". The 'denial' is of the power of God which is 'the cross of our Lord Jesus; the power of God and the wisdom of God' and the transformation the cross brings to a life when the person is truly born again. Such a power/ability relies totally on the finished work of our Lord Jesus.

We move on and note that it is interesting to read in James chapter 3 about the wisdom of this world, "*This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish*" (ASV). The word for 'sensual' comes from the Greek word 'psyche', the word for 'soul', and in the margin the ASV calls it 'human nature'. We see the progression as with Adam, who was first earthly; God formed Adam from the dust of the ground. He was then of the soul when God breathed into him and made him a living soul, and then 'devilish' when he followed the temptation of satan and sin entered into his heart. Jesus said to the Jews, "*You are of your father the devil*". If we follow the wisdom of this world, and pursue that which is first of the earth, of the rudiments of this world, and then of the soul which is sensual, or of feelings, emotion, and sensuality, that which satisfies the flesh, we will progress to that which is devilish. That is how many of the other religions start, with the result that in the end those who get deeply involved in their souls are taken over with the enemy. In many ways the same thing happens with all pursuits of the human soul which are contrary to truth, the deeper a person goes and gives themselves to that which they serve, the more the enemy takes over in mind and heart. That can even be a career, a profession and so on. There are so many things the human soul can form into an idol, no wonder apostle John says, "*Little children keep yourselves from idols*". Lots of the secret societies go that way and lead to devilish practices for those who are involved and that happens to also to those who go into paganism and secularism. The wisdom from above is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and His death for us. He provides 'a way' for us and enables us to be born again and know the Spirit of God in our

hearts. We can then be spiritual and not carnal and therefore no longer vulnerable to the 'prince of this world'.

However in many ways the 'wisdom' that is from beneath has infiltrated into many Christian groups, sects, denominations and so on. They may have all sorts of outward symbolism and ordinances and practices in which people participate. Alternatively there are those who use inward practices. They go for counselling and meditation and concentrate on 'soul' methods to try and bring satisfaction, feelings of self-worth and justification. We recognise too how the 'father of lies', the devil, has devised every conceivable method not only for other non-Christian religions and practices, but also for the unwary Christian to move into. Whenever the Spirit of God stops moving in power there is either a recognition of that fact and a seeking God for 'a time of refreshing' and a restoration, or the creation of a substitute, usually in an outward form of worship or practice which suits the flesh and can be operated in from the soul. Sadly the latter is the most usual, as when the Spirit of God stops moving the 'word of God' is not available to show the difference between soul and spirit. To quote from Jeremiah about the alternatives which the soul can produce; God told the children of Israel that they had committed two sins; they had 'forsaken the fountain of living waters and hewed out to themselves broken cisterns which hold no water'. Water here is about life. So they left that which is life and made something, an alternative, which had no life at all. This is the truth about all the substitutes which come from the soul of man and not from the Spirit of God. We see that souls can dress up, or at least be in bodies which enjoy dressing up with outward vestments, they can counsel, they can meditate, they can be involved in singing, choirs and so on. Of course there is wonderful singing, there is proper meditation, all can be to the glory of God. Charles Wesley wrote some wonderful hymns, hymns of revival, full of wonderful truth, and singing them with a thankful heart can be totally glorifying of God. However they can just be sung as part of a 'service' and merely warm the soul if that. Such singing can become so much part of what is expected in a 'service' and deny those who participate any possibility of being 'in the spirit'. All are a substitute and are not of the Holy Ghost, and are therefore of the flesh, of the natural man and cannot please God. They can provide much pleasure and satisfaction for those who engage in such activities and even the feeling that 'all is well', but they do not please God. There are so many alternatives to being 'crucified with Christ', bypasses around the need to be born again and the denial of self. Even when people are born again they can be taken to 'services' and become bound on the ways human souls have devised and prevented from developing into 'true worshippers'. Some 'Christian' denominations have even deceived people as to what is 'new birth' and when it takes place. We have everything from infant baptism to 'I am saved'. Some groups will provide a system in which unregenerate people can practice their 'Christian religion'. It is all a total deception and of the 'soul' for those who devise such methods and for those who participate, and as we have seen, that which starts out as soul will develop into that which is devilish. These things allow the soul, the self, to continue to be in control of the life rather than submitting all to the Lord Jesus and trusting in Him, embracing His work on the cross, so it is 'not I but Christ'. Many of these things are very subtle and again we come back to our original statement: **WE vitally need** the 'Word of God' to show us where we are, what is true, what is soul, natural man, and what is spirit, so that we do not 'believe a lie'. Also there is much in religious practice which accommodates the soul and allows it to continue in the practice of traditional culture within Christian expression. Some is very obvious, with the wearing of vestments for example, statues, crosses and so on. Other groups have dancing and singing which fits in with tribal practice. Concepts within a culture are taken over by the church with false hopes etc., the 'cargo cult' in the east, and the teaching of

prosperity doctrine are examples. The use of imagination and visualisation techniques is being incorporated into Christianity and yet these have their origins in Shamanism. All are deceptions but fit with the soulish desire for wealth, yet move into demonic practices and bring those who participate into awful spiritual darkness, and do not give eternal life. Other ways in which culture has been absorbed into 'Christian worship' is the use of drums and beats which are demonic in origin but become hidden away as part of meetings. Of course drums can be used as part of proper worship, like all things it is the source that is important and again why we need the 'word of God' and the gift of the discernment of spirits within a church, and especially among eldership, to see where the truth really is in what people are doing. Another way of deception is the adoption of 'saints' to cover up what is actually the worship of idols, statues of Mary, and Jesus on the cross, the list of options is almost endless. In modern times there are the 'rock gospel concerts' with all the drums and guitars and lots of noise and singing. It all looks great and it is so easy to be taken up with emotion and excitement and to enjoy the whole experience. Young people love it; we are told they can identify with it all as part of their culture. However does it permanently change their lives, do they come to a real knowledge of God, are they being changed into His likeness? If not, there is nothing of the Spirit of God in it all, convicting of sin, righteousness and judgement, and souls are alive and well, unchallenged as to the real thoughts and intents of the heart and still unaware of God's true requirements of them. The author remembers a pastor in Kenya who found the young people had stopped coming to his church. He went to find out why and was told that it was because the amplifier had broken and without all the instruments there was nothing to come for. They came for the music etc. and not for the Lord Jesus, and yet outwardly had looked to be really committed to the Lord. The real thoughts and intents of their hearts were exposed.

All these forms of religious practice, at whatever level, allow the involvement of mind, emotion, imagination and body, as we shall see, which are of flesh and not of the Spirit of God. Not all dancing and singing is wrong, of course, it can be quite wonderful and glorifying to the Lord Jesus. Not all emotion is wrong, Jesus wept, Jesus rejoiced, the word means to jump up and down and round and round, it is the source that is vitally important, Oh! Holy Spirit, help us to know. The use of the body in raising up hands and so on can be totally right, or also just flesh and copying others. People even produce in themselves feelings which they consider to be the Holy Spirit moving in them. They have all sorts of inward mechanisms for believing this is God and God's word. Of course there are feelings which are of the Holy Spirit and true and wonderful, but there are people who live in their own fantasy world of feelings, pictures and imaginations all of their own creation and all of their own soul. Souls and self are still operational in these lives and have not been put to death so that their lives are 'not I but Christ'. The truth is that 'by their fruits you will know them' and what are the outcomes of the pictures they see and the words they give? The author recently was in a meeting where the speaker started to say "I will prophecy these things". It was all of his own soul and probably the idea came from watching some video of a famous speaker. It all looks impressive to the gullible in the congregation who are highly impressionable, but what of the fruit? Such practices are just unacceptable but demonstrate the ignorance of real spiritual things in modern day Christianity. To return to feelings and pictures and imaginations, they can all come out from forms of meditation when imagery is the thing which people follow. God never allowed the Children of Israel to make any form of image, especially anything which resembled the likeness of God. The reason, they would have made it into an idol and followed it; even the 'serpent in the wilderness' was made into an idol; people bowed down and worshipped it so it had to be destroyed. Souls and the imagination of hearts love images and idols, but they all must be cast

down and destroyed. Paul says, *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”*. All this imagery exalts itself against God, but we are to see Jesus ‘crowned with glory and honour’ by the Spirit of God who will take the things of Jesus and reveal them to us. We form no image in our minds but have a revelation in our hearts of the true glory of God which enables us to worship in Spirit and truth. Hallelujah, we call Jesus ‘Lord’ by the Holy Ghost, and love, pure love, rises from our hearts in total adoration.

As we keep saying, it is the source of what we do which is important and why we need God to judge us. Only God is the judge of our hearts so it is vital that we do not judge one another, however it is also vital to hear the ‘word of God’ in the heart and thereby allow God to speak His judgement so that we know that which is spirit and truth. Paul in 2 Corinthians 13 says this, *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates”* The word for reprobate means ‘not to stand the test’. In other words, when the examination comes you fail. Romans 8 tells us ‘if we do not have the Spirit of Christ then we are none of His’. So we have to go through an examination, we must examine ourselves and prove ourselves, but for that we depend on God’s word to show us whether we are of Him or not. For the true ‘born again’ Christian there will be his/her spirit bearing witness with the Spirit of God, crying ‘Abba, Father’. That witness or testimony confirms that we are the ‘sons of God’ and genuinely know God as our Father. Any outcome less than that and we fail the test, ‘by their fruits you shall know them’. John in his letter says this, *“Whosoever abides in him sins not: whosoever sins hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil”*. The tenses in the original language are continuous. So the scripture tells us that the person who goes on committing sin, or put another way, continues to sin, is not of God. The standard is high and people don’t like it. It exposes the truth and yet this is what the Bible says and again we cannot change what God has said and replace it with our own ideas. God has set the standard to protect His people from ‘fake Christians and fake Christianity’.

The besetting sin is one of unbelief, so a person continually doubting God struggles to pass the test. Paul tells us that we are to receive those who are weak in faith. But this is a self-judgement in the light of God and each person needs to go through that judgement and pass the test. It is better to be ‘proved’ now and know the truth, so that if a person fails the test, he can come to God and put things right and receive the Lord Jesus. On the other hand the person who continues to be righteous, who continues to believe, is of God. In other words the normal life of a Christian is one that is lived in the righteousness of Jesus Christ and is righteous. So John advises us, “Don’t be deceived”. Has the power of sin been broken in this life or is the person still living in their soul, in their natural man? Are they still wrapped up in and following the culture of their first birth? Has their life been transformed and are they worshipping in ‘Spirit and truth’, or are they just religious, are they of soul or spirit?

We will now return to Hebrews 4:12. It tells us that the ‘word’ is ‘very sharp’, more than a two edged sword, and divides between joints and marrow, very deep things. Marrow is where the blood is produced, the life is in the blood, so this is about the life source; joints are merely how movements function. It is important that we understand not only about what we do, how we move and how we function, but where the source of what we do comes from. Is it of ‘life’? Two edged swords do not slash and cut but penetrate; their work is not to do damage and destroy but to convict, and therefore the

word of God must penetrate and enter the depths of our hearts; we must allow that to take place in order to be shown where the thoughts and intentions of our hearts really come from. What are the thoughts and intentions of the heart in everything we do? Are they to glorify God or for self-promotion and self-gain?

The movements, the things we do, can be identical in many ways when looked at from the outside. A preacher can preach, even using the same words, but what are the thoughts and intentions of the heart, whose glory is he/she seeking in the very depths of their heart? What life is there in the preacher, spiritual, eternal, the life of God, or just natural life? It does not matter how impressive, powerful and dramatic the preaching is, is it of the soul or the Spirit of God? Does it matter? Very much so with the preacher, indeed any 'ministry' at all, it is the effect it will have on those who listen. That of the Spirit of God will produce life and freedom, soul the opposite. Paul says, "*For ye suffer, if a man brings you into bondage, if a man devours you, if a man takes of you, if a man exalts himself*". So we see damage is done to those who are subject to the ministry that comes from the soul and self. It is earthly, then soulish as we have seen, and then becomes devilish and brings people into spiritual bondage. Jesus says, "*The words I speak to you are Spirit and they are life*". Do you see the difference? What motive has the preacher/minister; self-promotion of a ministry and financial gain, reputation among men, or the glory of God? Jesus made Himself of no reputation and took on Him the form of a servant, was made like a man and humbled Himself; that is 'spirit', anything less than that level of sacrifice is 'soul'. Jesus said, "*If any man will follow after me let him take up His cross*"! If we look too at singing; 'singing is singing', that is the work of the joints, it is just an action: however what is the source? What 'life' is there in the singer, spiritual, eternal, the life of God or just natural life, however impressive, powerful and dramatic and of the soul? Is the singing entertainment and great fun or does it really glorify God? It does really matter as only that which is of Spirit will please God, those who worship must worship in Spirit and truth; only that of the 'new creation' avails with God.

So we need to look at spiritual believing, as this is the way into being in the Spirit. Everything in the kingdom of God operates by faith, by His faith, by the 'faith of the Son of God'. 'Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God'. There are two main words in the original language for 'word'. One means the 'heard word' and the other is just the 'word', the absolute word. It is the 'heard word', often described as the 'rhema' word, which is the Greek word used in the New Testament, describing the word which brings faith. As we keep saying, it is essential that we hear the word of God, and Jesus when tempted of satan says, "*Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word (rhema) which comes out of the mouth of God*". So Jesus lived by the 'heard word' and so must we, but it brought Jesus a position of faith based on the absolute word of God. It is essential for us if we are to believe God to hear the 'rhema' word of God, "*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word (rhema) of God*". That heard word will be on the basis of the 'logos' word, the absolute word of God. It will bring us too to a place of faith based on what God has said and is His true absolute word. The 'heard word' will never contradict the absolute word, as God cannot lie and will not say something to a person which contradicts what God says in His word and especially in the Bible. The Bible is not the absolute word; the absolute word is more than that, but the Bible is God's true word and the absolute authority by which we have to live. So when it says, 'Owe no one anything' it means just that; so God will not be telling someone to go and borrow money from someone else. He says 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be provided for you'. So does that mean we can take things into our own hands and methods and, for example, organise a fund raising meeting to persuade people to give, especially when we look

to those in the world, non-Christians to give? The Bible says you shall not commit adultery, so are we to take things into our own hands and take a second wife? The Bible says we should not bear false witness, that we should not lie, so are we then free to tell lies and be dishonest to get that which we need or to cover up our wrong doing? There are so many absolute things God says to us in the Bible but so often people think they can have an alternative point of view. The Bible tells us that God created the heavens and the earth so are we to believe in evolution? Of course not, we cannot make up our own minds and make our own choices. That would be of soul and not of spirit; it comes from the arrogance of the human soul and is contrary to being humbled before God to hear His word. We cannot have 'any faith', we cannot have that which we believe, true faith is that which is ministered by the 'word of God', and will only serve to cause us to trust in the Lord Jesus and that God always keeps His promises. We are told that, "*Whatsoever you ask in faith, believing you will receive*". So when we pray in the Spirit, we will pray in true faith, by the word of God based on the absolute word of God, and we will receive. Not possibly receive or maybe receive. So if we don't receive, what of our faith? Is it true faith of the Spirit and spiritual or just created in the imagination of our hearts to serve the intentions of our own heart and will? Yes we have to seek and knock, but those who seek find, and those who knock have the door opened. So true faith receives, as it is based on the word of God. So do we truly believe, based on the faith of the Son of God which will liberate us into the spirit and allows us to operate in the kingdom of God by the Spirit of God? This is 'spirit' and will be seen by the word of God showing us in our hearts that our intentions are based on 'the word of God' to us, and that will keep us from being soulish. To say it a different way, the 'Word of God' is that which shows us whether we are of soul or Spirit, and when the heard word comes to us based on the 'word' it will create faith in us so that we can believe God on the principles He has laid down. Our lives will then be in truth, totally trusting in God, and then the lives we live we will live by faith, God's faith, of which Jesus is the author and finisher; that must be of Spirit. True faith, the faith of God, enables the Spirit in a born again Christian and liberates, or releases, it through the natural soul to take control of a whole life and subdues the natural man by the power of the Spirit of God. Paul says, "*We have this treasure in earthen vessels so that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us*". That treasure has to be manifested, not just hidden away. Faith facilitates that manifestation, that release of the spirit, as we trust in God and not in ourselves, not seeking self-promotion or self-will but the will and glory of God.

This is so important, let us put it in another way again. Paul said that having been crucified with Christ, he lived, and as alive, he lived by the 'faith of the Son of God'. The 'hearing of faith' therefore will move us into the faith of the Son of God and that is what we will live by. Believing releases the spirit of God in our hearts and we can then fully co-operate in the faith of Jesus Christ and walk in the spirit; that is spiritual living, it is of grace by faith. "*The just shall live by faith*". Anything else will leave us in the soul realm, especially when we are following our own ideas, rather than the absolute word of God. The 'word of God' is eternal and unalterable and without compromise and will stand as our judge. It will show us the thoughts and intents of our heart, and show that if we do not live this way we are really still moving in our souls, that we are fleshly and carnal. 'Narrow is the way to life and broad is the way to destruction'. God always intended the way to be narrow, but He gives us the grace to follow if we will look to Him. His strength is made perfect in weakness, but this is the way our Lord Jesus went, "*Not my will but your will be done*".

The natural man cannot receive the things of the spirit of God and the 'minding of the flesh' cannot be subject to the 'law of God'; this is our warning. On the other hand, to be 'spiritually minded' or 'minding the things of the spirit' is life and peace. The Spirit of God reveals the deep things of God to

those who love Him; He will take the things of our Lord Jesus and reveal them to us. He will show us that which is available by the spirit of God in our lives and enable us to believe and then apply them. *“Jesus Christ is made to us wisdom, righteousness and sanctification and redemption”*. So here is the stark choice. Soul or spirit, Carnal or Spiritual? Judge, but let God judge, hear His absolute word and let it pierce into your soul and show you what is soul and spirit, and then hear the word of faith which will cause you to totally believe on the Lord Jesus. It will enable you always to live on the basis of the cross of our Lord Jesus, by which the world is crucified to you and you to the world. It will enable you to have nothing of yourself, and this will release the Holy Spirit in you and enable in you a spiritual life. If you have received the Lord Jesus, you are alive in the spirit and you can live in the spirit, so walk in the spirit and truly be a spiritual man or woman. Jesus promised that out of our depths would flow rivers of living water and here it is! This is the life of the Spirit of God flowing in us His people. It catches up our souls in these wonderful flowings of God and works through the life into our bodies. Our natural appetites of flesh and mind, of self and self-will, that which is of the old man, will be put to death and subdued, rendered inactive, and we will bring forth fruit, spiritual fruit unto God. *“Herein is my Father glorified that you bring forth much fruit”*. No flesh will glory in God’s presence, and in this way in the Spirit our lives will not be of flesh, and therefore soul, but of spirit and of the Holy Spirit, and be to the praise and glory of God’s wonderful and amazing grace, that He should provide such a great salvation and wonderful redemption for His people. Hallelujah! Amen!